

Claims:

1. A context sensitive device comprising:

a card portion having a surface onto which are formed a plurality of user interpretable icons; and

5 electronic apparatus attached to said card portion, said apparatus comprising:

a memory in which are retained at least a plurality of character strings including contextual information, each of said character strings being associated with a corresponding one of said icons;

processor means coupled to said memory means; and

10 communication means for coupling said processor means to a reading device configured to facilitate reading said context sensitive device,

wherein said processor means is configured to relate reading signals generated from a user selection of at least one of said icons and received via said communication means with at least one of said retained character strings to thus transmit an output signal
15 for indicating a desired service based on said contextual information.

2. A context sensitive device according to claim 1, further comprising a transceiver apparatus for receiving and analysing said output signal in order to enable or reject a performance of said desired service based on said contextual information.

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3. A context sensitive device according to claim 2, wherein said transceiver apparatus is coupled to said context sensitive device via a communications channel.

4. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said
25 performance of said desired service is enabled if a portion of contextual information

matches an actual portion of contextual information, otherwise another transmission of said output signal is requested.

5. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said performance of said desired service is enabled if a portion of contextual information falls within a predetermined range, otherwise another transmission of said output signal is requested.

6. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 4 or 5, wherein said processor means compares said plurality of character strings with a subsequently received character string upon said request for another transmission of said output signal.

7. A context sensitive device according to claim 6, wherein said processor means is configured to transmit another output signal based on said comparison of said plurality of character strings with said subsequently received character string.

8. A context sensitive device according to claim 1, wherein said icons comprise a first set of icons providing for user generation of said retained character strings, and a second set of icons corresponding to those said icons associated with said retained character strings.

9. A context sensitive device according to claim 8, wherein said first set of icons depict at least an alphanumeric character set.

10. A context sensitive device according to claim 9, wherein said first set of icons further depicts at least one control function associated with forming said reading signals.

11. A context sensitive device according to claim 8, wherein said second set of icons each comprise an image.

12. A context sensitive device according to claim 8, wherein said reading signals comprise position information of said icons on said surface and said memory means and processor means together perform a mapping function to associate said position information with individual characters of said strings to thereby interpret a user selection of a plurality of icons of said first set with one of said character strings.

13. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein said reading device comprises a touch panel configured to overlay said surface and through which said icons are visible to said user.

14. A context sensitive device according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said contextual information is related to position.

15. A context sensitive device according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said contextual information is related to time.

16. A method of using a context sensitive device to enable performance of a desired service, said context sensitive device comprising:

a card portion having a surface onto which are formed a plurality of user interpretable icons; and

electronic apparatus attached to said card portion, said apparatus comprising:

a memory in which are retained at least a plurality of character strings including contextual information, each of said character strings being associated with a corresponding one of said icons;

processor means coupled to said memory means; and

5 communication means for coupling said processor means to a reading device configured to facilitate reading said context sensitive device;

said method comprising the steps of:

 (a) relating reading signals generated from a user selection of at least one of said icons and received via said communication means with at least one of said retained
10 character strings including a portion of said contextual information;

 (d) transmitting an output signal including said at least one retained character string, wherein said output signal indicates said desired service;

 (e) comparing said portion of contextual information to an actual portion of contextual information; and

15 (f) enabling said performance of said desired service based on said comparison.

17. The method according to claims 16, wherein said context sensitive device further comprises a transceiver apparatus for receiving and analysing said output signal in order
20 to carry out said comparison and thus to enable performance of said desired service based on said comparison.

18. The method according to claim 17, wherein said transceiver apparatus is coupled to said context sensitive device via a communications channel.

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19. The method according to any one of claims 16 to 18, wherein said performance of said desired service is enabled if said portion of contextual information matches an actual portion of contextual information, otherwise another transmission of said output signal is requested.

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20. The method according to any one of claims 16 to 18, wherein said performance of said desired service is enabled if said portion of contextual information falls within a predetermined range, otherwise another transmission of said output signal is requested.

10 21. The method according to claim 19 or 20, comprising the further step of comparing said plurality of character strings with a subsequently received character string upon said request for another transmission of said output signal.

22. The method according to claim 21, comprising the further step of transmitting
15 another output signal based on said comparison of said plurality of character strings with said subsequently received character string.

23. A method according to any one of claims 16 to 21, wherein said reading device comprises a touch panel configured to overlay said surface and through which said icons
20 are visible to said user.

24. The method according to any one of claims 16 to 23, wherein said contextual information is related to position.

25 25. The method according to any one of claims 16 to 23, wherein said contextual information is related to time.

26. A context sensitive device comprising:

a card portion and an electronic apparatus attached to said card portion, said apparatus comprising:

5 a memory in which are retained at least a plurality of character strings including contextual information;

processor means coupled to said memory means; and

communication means for coupling said processor means to a reading device configured to facilitate reading said context sensitive device,

10 wherein said processor means is configured to transmit an output signal including a portion of said contextual information, for indicating a desired service based on said contextual information.

27. A context sensitive device according to claim 26, further comprising a
15 transceiver apparatus for receiving and analysing said output signal in order to enable or reject a performance of said desired service based on said portion of contextual information.

28. A context sensitive device according to claim 27, wherein said transceiver
20 apparatus is coupled to said context sensitive device via a communications channel.

29. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 26 to 28, wherein said
performance of said desired service is enabled if said portion of said contextual
information matches an actual portion of contextual information, otherwise another
25 transmission of said output signal is requested.

30. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 26 to 28, wherein said performance of said desired service is enabled if said portion of contextual information falls within a predetermined range, otherwise another transmission of said output signal is requested.

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31. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 29 or 30, wherein said processor means is configured to compare said plurality of character strings with a subsequently received character string upon said request for another transmission of said output signal.

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32. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 31, wherein said processor means is configured to transmit another output signal based on said comparison of said plurality of character strings with said subsequently received character string.

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33. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 26 to 32, wherein said contextual information is related to position.

34. A context sensitive device according to any one of claims 26 to 32, wherein said contextual information is related to time.

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35. A context sensitive device comprising:

a card portion having a surface onto which are formed a plurality of user interpretable icons;

a memory in which are retained at least a plurality of character strings including
25 contextual information, each of said character strings being associated with a
corresponding one of said icons; and

communication means for coupling said memory to a processor means of a reading device configured to facilitate reading said context sensitive device,

wherein said processor means is configured to relate reading signals generated from a user selection of at least one of said icons and received via said communication means with at least one of said retained character strings to thus transmit an output signal for indicating a desired service based on said contextual information.

36. A context sensitive device substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the embodiments as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

37. A context sensitive service provision system comprising:
a control template, adapted for insertion into a template reader, the template (i) having at least one user selectable control icon, and (ii) storing a character string associated with said at least one icon, said character string incorporating icon contextual information;

said reader, being responsive to a user selection of said at least one control icon of an inserted said control template, said reader being adapted to communicate a signal including said associated character string; and

a service provision device, responsive to a communicated said signal, and adapted to provide a service corresponding to the associated character string dependent upon the icon contextual information contained in said communicated signal.

38. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein the reader and the service provision device are physically separate entities which communicate using a communication channel.

39. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein the reader and the service provision device are integrated into a single physical entity.

40. A control template, adapted for insertion into a template reader for use in a context sensitive service provision system, the control template comprising:
at least one user selectable control icon; and
storage means for storing a character string associated with said at least one icon, said character string incorporating icon contextual information.

41. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein the reader has reader contextual information associated therewith, said reader contextual information being communicated in the signal;
the service provision device has device contextual information associated therewith;
the service provision device is further adapted to provide the service if the device contextual information matches at least one of the icon contextual information and the reader contextual information contained in said communicated signal; and
the service provision device is further adapted to (i) communicate the device contextual information to the reader, and (ii) request at least one of updated icon contextual information and updated reader contextual information, if the device contextual information does not match at least one of the icon contextual information and the reader contextual information contained in said communicated signal.

42. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein said service is provided if at least one of the icon contextual information and the reader

contextual information contained in said communicated signal falls within range defined by the device contextual information.

43. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein said control template further comprises a first set of user selectable control icons providing for user generation of character strings, and a second set of user selectable control icons with which said character strings are associated.

44. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein at least one of the reader contextual information, and the device contextual information are related to corresponding locations of said reader and said device.

45. A context sensitive service provision system according to claim 37, wherein at least one of the reader contextual information, and the device contextual information are related to a time at which the user selection of said at least one control icon takes place.

46. A method of providing a context sensitive service, the method comprising steps of:

inserting a control template into a template reader, the template (i) having at least one user selectable control icon, and (ii) storing a character string associated with said at least one icon, said character string incorporating icon contextual information;

selecting, by a user, said at least one control icon;

communicating, by said reader, in response to the user selection, a signal including said associated character string;

receiving, by a service provision device, of said communicated signal; and

providing, by the service provision device, a service corresponding to the associated character string dependent upon the icon contextual information contained in said communicated signal.

- 5 47. A method of providing a context sensitive service according to claim 46, comprising further steps of:

communicating, by the reader, reader contextual information associated with the reader; wherein:

- 10 if device contextual information associated with the service provision device matches at least one of the icon contextual information and the reader contextual information contained in said communicated signal, the providing step is performed; and wherein:

- 15 if the device contextual information does not match at least one of the icon contextual information and the reader contextual information contained in said communicated signal, the providing step is preceded by the steps of:

communicating, by the service provision device, device contextual information to the reader; and

requesting, by the service provision device, at least one of updated icon contextual information and updated reader contextual information.

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48. A computer readable medium for storing a program for a system providing context sensitive information; wherein a control template is inserted into a template reader, the template (i) having at least one user selectable control icon, and (ii) storing a character string associated with said at least one icon, said character string incorporating icon contextual information; and wherein said at least one control icon is selected by a user; said program comprising:

code for a communicating step, for communicating, by said reader, in response to the user selection, a signal including said associated character string;

code for a receiving step, for receiving, by a service provision device, of said communicated signal; and

5 code for a providing step, for providing, by the service provision device, a service corresponding to the associated character string dependent upon the icon contextual information contained in said communicated signal.

49. A computer readable medium according to claim 48, further comprising:

10 code for a communicating step, for communicating, by the reader, reader contextual information associated with the reader;

code for a communicating step, for communicating, by the service provision device, device contextual information to the reader if the device contextual information does not match at least one of the icon contextual information and the reader contextual
15 information contained in said communicated signal; and

code for a requesting step, for requesting, by the service provision device, at least one of updated icon contextual information and updated reader contextual information.

20 50. A computer readable medium for storing a program for using a context sensitive device to enable performance of a desired service; wherein said context sensitive device comprises:

(i) a card portion having a surface onto which are formed a plurality of user interpretable icons, and electronic apparatus attached to said card portion; said apparatus
25 comprising:

(a) a memory in which are retained at least a plurality of character strings including contextual information, each of said character strings being associated with a corresponding one of said icons;

(b) processor means coupled to said memory means; and

5 (c) communication means for coupling said processor means to a reading device configured to facilitate reading said context sensitive device;

said program comprising:

(a) code for a relating step for relating reading signals generated from a user selection of at least one of said icons and received via said communication means with at
10 least one of said retained character strings including a portion of said contextual information;

(b) code for a transmitting step for transmitting an output signal including said at least one retained character string, wherein said output signal indicates said desired service;

15 (c) code for a comparing step for comparing said portion of contextual information to an actual portion of contextual information; and

(d) code for an enabling step for enabling said performance of said desired service based on said comparison.